Combating Wildlife Crime and Preventing Environmental Harm

We propose a national innovation program to provide environmental biosecurity and enforcement agencies the winning edge they need to reverse the growth in wildlife crime and prevent environmental harm.

Environment Institute

Why the focus on wildlife crime?

- Globally, wildlife crime is worth $30b-100b per annum, and is often associated with organised crime.

- Wildlife and environmental crimes are growing at more than twice the rate of the global economy.

- Wildlife crime seriously endangers Australia's unique landscapes and biodiversity.

- The result of these crimes is they exacerbate global economic and social insecurity.

- They expose us to potentially disastrous biosecurity risks, and threaten our livelihoods and wellbeing.

- Requirement to provide 'strong, independent compliance and enforcement' (Samuel Review, 2020) and 'new extinctions of plants and animals are prevented' (Threatened Species Action Plan 2022-2032).

Wildlife crimes include:

- the illegal trade and commerce in plants and animals;

- illegal harvesting of fish, timber, and other natural goods; and

- the illegal harm or killing of wildlife, including vegetation clearance and interference in conservation or regeneration programs.

How can we provide enforcement agencies the winning edge?

There is a critical lack of resources and tools in Australia and across the globe; including on-ground surveillance and compliance capability. The program we propose will focus on four key areas of innovation to address this, including pathways for translation and adoption:

1. a deeper and clearer **situation analysis** of wildlife crime across Australia and the Australasian and Indo-Pacific region;

2. development of fit-for-purpose, cheaper, and more effective **surveillance tools**,

3. the **evaluation** of national policy and enforcement strategies; and

4. **raising social and political awareness**, including behaviour change and guidance on legislative reform.

The resources we co-develop with Government and environmental biosecurity agencies will provide on-ground enforcement practitioners and decision-makers with the tools and knowledge they need to tip the balance in their favour. They will be able to predict and identify wildlife crimes in real time and have the right enforcement tools and community support to bring perpetrators to justice.

Who will be involved?

We will work with the key Commonwealth and State/Territory government agencies to partner with the best research groups from Australian universities and CSIRO.

We will support those tools that are best held in public hands due to data sensitivities, and partner with industry to commercialise those tools that are best delivered through the private sector.

The program is led by **Dr Phill Cassey**, a globally recognised research expert in the illegal wildlife trade. Phill is a member of the AELERT and INTERPOL Wildlife Crime Working Groups. In 2019 he was nominated by the Australian Government as a lead author on the UN Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity & Ecosystem Services (IPBES) 'Global Biodiversity Assessment Report'.

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